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ABSTRACT

In recent years progress has been made in facilitating the acquisition of interpersonal English language skills through the use of new approaches such as the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, which is based on the premise that second language learning involves the same stages as those evidenced in first language acquisition. TPR-Plus, an expanded version of the TPR approach, applies TPR not only to acquisition of interpersonal communication, but also to the more formal English of classroom instruction. Based on the abilities and needs of limited English proficiency (LEP) students, the lessons are related to curriculum areas, with the focus on the communicative functions students need in order to succeed in a classroom. With regard to instructional materials, the teacher would diagnose students' linguistic and academic needs and then adapt materials to their needs and purposes. Whatever material is used or adapted, the basic criterion for including academic and/or linguistic content is its usability; that is, the students must be able to use the selected vocabulary and structures many times throughout the day. As the course progresses, the teacher becomes a facilitator of learning, presenting content in a manner compatible with the students' ability and readiness to acquire it. (AMH)

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TPR-PLUS

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The ever increasing number of limited English proficient (LEP) students with diverse primary languages enrolled in Californian schools has intensified the search for an approach that not only would facilitate the acquisition of English by these students but also would enable them to progress academically. Concept learning in the content areas cannot be postponed while a student is acquiring English language proficiency unless it is the established policy of the educational system that LEP students will perform academically below grade level. No school board would knowingly ascribe to such a policy, but test results verify that this is what is happening in grades K-12.

In recent years, great progress has been made in facilitating the acquisition of basic interpersonal English language proficiency by LEP students by use of new approaches which emphasize communication rather than grammar and "correct" pronunciation. Especially notable is the work of Dr. James Asher in the development of Total Physical Response. Although the value of involving as many senses as possible in the learning process is well known to all experienced teachers, it was not until Dr. James Asher published "Learning Another Language Through Actions" in 1977 that the use of the kinesthetic sense in language learning became popular.(Asher, 1977). Asher, a psychologist at San Jose State University, originally was concerned with the lack of success in teaching foreign languages in the United States as evidenced by the 95% drop out rate and the limited speaking and

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comprehension proficiency of students who had completed a foreign language program in high school and/or college. That the classroom was an unnatural, artificial environment for language learning could not be the main cause of their restricted ability to communicate in a foreign language.

Based on the premise that second language learning involved the same stages as evidenced in the acquisition of one's primary language, Asher emphasized that oral comprehension of English as a Second Language (ESL) as well as any foreign language should precede speaking, reading, and writing it. Until this time, grammar-translation, or the audio-lingual approach exemplified in the works of Charles Fries or the transformational-cognitive approach of Noam Chomsky were used extensively in foreign language and ESL instruction. These approaches introduced oral comprehension, speaking, reading and writing simultaneously. Asher reasoned that students could not remember that which they could not understand and that they could not use what they could not remember. The essential first step to language aquisition, oral comprehension, should be developed through all the senses, including the kinesthetic sense, by having students respond physically to commands. From the study of small children acquiring their primary language, it was evident that they could respond successfully physically to verbal requests long before they could produce even the most basic telegraphic utterance. Asher felt that students learning a second language should begin the process in the same manner, free from the need of vocalizing responses and free from the fear of making errors; that the students should

actively participate in the making sense out of what to them is nonsense; that they should be given the opportunity to perceive meanings of words and structures and the relationship among them. Asher maintained that all the grammatical structures of English as well as many vocabulary items could be learned through the use of the imperative; that by involving the students in the learning process and by involving as many senses as possible, especially the kinesthetic sense, motivation and retention of learning would be greatly increased. Even the most introverted, withdrawn student would respond to commands. According to Asher, speaking should be delayed until the students spontaneously began to produce utterances, even if this took months. When the students were ready to respond orally, then and only then were role reversals, questioning, reading and writing introduced into the lessons. At all times, communication was to be emphasized rather than linguistic form. Just as when a child learns his primary language, overgeneralizations cause errors in the use of morphemes, phonemes and syntax, so it is in second language learning. With greater exposure to the target language and with increased opportunities and need to communicate, these intralanguage errors disappear without direct instruction. Studies have shown that most learners are unable to successfully transfer their mechanical control of grammatical patterns and pronunciation to real communicative situations.(Taylor, 1982). The conditions the insure competence in a primary language by age four or five also insure communicative competence in a second language. These conditons are:

1. Participation in successful communicative events.

2. Initial reliance on contextual cues for the meaning of linguistic symbols.

3. Modeling of language instead of correction.

4. Emphasis on comprehension before production.

5. Focus on meaning.

6. Implicit, unsequenced instruction.
(Asher, 1977; Krashen, 1978; Burling, 1982)

Many versions of the Total Physical Response approach to teaching ESL have appeared on the market during the past few years and are very popular. Berty Segal, a student of Asher, has developed the widely used program "Teaching English Through Action". Dr. Asher was a consultant to the Whisman Elementary School District, Mountain View, CA,in the development of "Quick Start to English" under a grant funded by ESEA Title IV-C, California State Department of Education. The first stages of this program now are being published by Addison Wesley under the title "Beta". When the contents of all of these programs are examined, it is very evident that basic interpersonal language skills are being developed, not the cognitive, academic skills that are vital to achieving success in the classroom.

LEP students are immersed in the informal social register of English throughout the school day both in and out of the classroom; in the cafeteria; on the playground; wherever there is a communicative need. Because of the relaxed atmosphere where the focus is on meaning, the social, interpersonal English competence is acquired relatively quickly and easily with or without classroom instruction. The more formal English of classroom instruction is not. By applying the Total Physical Response approach to

the content areas and with increased emphasis on questioning, thinking, reading and writing skills, TPR-Plus facilitates academic achievement and the acquisition of English in a classroom atmosphere where the students feel secure, unthreatened, non-defensive and free to initiate communication and to direct their own learning based on perceived needs.

The TPR-Plus approach is based on the principle that any topic can be treated at any degree of linguistic difficulty; that thinking skills can be taught at all levels of English language acquisition; that the content of ESL should lessons be based on the cognitive academic needs of the students. This approach recognizes that the students are capable of learning; of inferring, generalizing, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating; of solving problems, no matter what their English language proficiency level might be. Based on the abilities and needs of the students, the lessons are related to areas of the curriculum but the principal focus is not the academic content but the cummunicative functions necessary to succeed in a classroom. It is an eclectic approach combining the principles of Total Physical Response, the natural approach, English for Special Purposes, high intensity language training, and whatever else is deemed necessary by the teacher for the students to acquire academic, cognitive competence in English.

There are no written materials utilizing the TPR-Plus approach since it is impossible for any published materials to meet the specific needs of a given group of students.(Stevick, 1971) However, such materials may be adapted to the TPR-Plus

approach if the teacher has thoroughly diagnosed the linguistic and academic needs of the students, has determined their entry level linguistically and academically, and is proficient in ESL methodology. Where TPR-Plus differs from most other approaches to ESL instruction is the inclusion of the academic dimension.

The HILT-ESL Program For Secondary School Students developed by Susana Maiztegui, Rosa Kestelman and Rosaura Sanchez at the request of the San Diego Lau Center does relate language and cognition by drawing topics from geography, life sciences, mathematics and other content areas.(Kestelman ,1980) It consists of a booklet of audio-motor activities, a teacher's manual, and student workbooks. The authors stipulate that the materials should not be used without proper training by them. This program, still in the experimental stage, has been used successfully at Southwest Junior High and Sweetwater High School in the South Bay School District, San Diego, at the Santa Barbara High School, Santa Barbara, and at the Sunset School in the Vineland School District, Kern County. It follows the philosophy and design of the HILT-plus Program in Spanish for Educators that was developed in 1969 by Kestelman and Maiztegui for the USC-Teacher Corps Rural Migrant Project in which the physical response approach was used successfully several years before Asher's book was published. (Kestelman, 1980) In this program, participants, grouped homogeneously based on their Spanish language competency, are immersed in Spanish for eight hours a day for four weeks using Spanish language materials that are relevant and respond to participants' specific needs in social and academic situations. There is an integration of language, academic content and culture

in all the materials and activities. Intensive language instruction is used because of the belief that as intensity of instrtuction increases so does the learning effectiveness of each hour of teaching. The Hilt-plus Program in Spanish for Educators has been implemented through out California under the training and supervision of Kestelman and Maiztegui. As an instructor in the program for three summers in Bakersfield offered by the Bilingual Consortium of the Office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools, I witnessed the participants' rapid progress in their ability to communicate in Spanish and their high motivation. The retention of the learning also was evident as I continued professional contact with some participants throughout the following school year.

The Hilt-ESL Program For Secondary Students, as the name suggests, is designed for junior high and high school students who have developed in their primary language the basic conceptual skills included in the program. The authors do not recommend HILT-ESL be used with students who do not have these skills, both cognitive and linguis-tic, in their primary language. For the first two days of the Hilt-ESL program, the non-English speaking students respond physically to commands, the vocabulary of which is based on the social and academic needs of the students. The intent is not mastery of the commands, but oral comprehension. These commands subsequently are reviewed when introducing related lessons. Immediately upon completion of the Audio Motor Response booklet, the students begin to give commands themselves, first by mimicking the instructor who performs the action, then by crea-

ting original commands. Transference then is made to the written form. The sequence in all the lessons, no matter how advanced, is comprehension, oral production, reading, and writing, with students given the opportunity to create original responses. Because of the age, academic and linguistic requirements for their use, the HILT-ESL materials cannot be used by many LEP students. However, the format and design of the lessons are usefull models for the adaptation of lessons to the TPR-Plus approach which is applicable to all students.

The decision to include any academic and/or linguistic content when adapting published material to the TRP-Plus approach is based on its usability. The students must be able to use the selected vocabulary and stuctures in actual communication in many other situations through out the school day. The phrase, "this is a book', or "this is a pencil", etc., frequently found in published ESL materials, is of limited use since the phrase rarely is employed other than in an ESL classroom. Instead of relatively useless material, the lessons should consist of vocabulary in structures heard in other classroom situations through out the day. The material presented in the ESL lesson thus would be used and reused many times. All teachers know that students learn more rapidly and retain material better when it is related to their personal needs and experiences; that the more meaningful the material to be learned, the greater the facility in learning and retention; that students learn more rapidly and effectively if they have a reason for doing so. (Halliday et al., 1964) When using the TPR-Plus approach, the teacher makes sure that the lessons are meaningful, the material usable.

Even the phrase, "this is a _____", can be useful when used to develop thinking skills, as illustrated in Basic Thinking Skills-Patterns (Harnadek, 1977). The students are given problems in which they try to figure out what something is. They are given two examples of what the thing is and two examples of what the thing is not. They then are shown other pictures and asked whether or not those are pictures of the thing. They have to figure out what the thing is supposed to be. The students are encouraged to suggest, discuss and argue about their answers. They have a reason to communicate.

The importance of the teacher in the TPR-Plus approach cannot be overemphasized. At first the teacher is completely in control, but is a partner, a facilitator, not an autocrat. Gradually the control is assumed by the students. No one apprach can be used. The teacher makes a judicious selection, timing and blending them to meet the needs of the students. Above all, the content must be presented in a manner compatible with the students' ability and readiness to acquire it. The emphasis is on the ability of students to get a message across with teacher feedback related to its communicative appropriateness, not the linguistic form.. However, at times it is appropriate for the teacher to provide samples of the target language and guidance concerning its structure - rules, cues, etc. In other words, the teacher teaches what is needed when it is needed. To make the proper diagnosis, prescription and evaluation requires a teacher skilled in ESL methodology with a strong background in linguistics and first and second language acquisition.

As in Total Physicl Response and HILT-ESL, in the TRP-Plus approach, the students are highly motivated. They become actively involved in the lessons and their content because the lessons are related to academic goals. The students see that the lessons are relevant to their needs. They respond to the teacher's expectation that they are intelligent beings whose minds were not vacuums until they entered the ESL classroom; that they are capable of mastering the English language and school curriculum. The students become living examples of the proverb, "Tell me and I will forget. Teach me and I will remember. Involve me and I will learn."

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